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WASHINGTON

U.S. Betrayed Libyan Coup Plotters; Former U.S. Official Says
By CHRISTOPHER HANSON

U.S. EMBASSY OFFICIALS

IN TRIPOLI; LIBYA; BETRAYED MILITARY OFFICERS PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW LIBYAN LEADER MUHAMMAR GADDAFI IN 1971 AND THIS LED TO THE EXECUTION OF THE PLOTTERS; A FORMER U.S. INTELLIGENCE ANALYST SAID TODAY.

"THEY WERE BETRAYED BY THE AMERICANS," SAID JOSEPH CHURBA; WHO SERVED AS THE SENIOR AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE ADVISER ON THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE EARLY 1970s.

CHURBA; WHO LATER SERVED AS A FOREIGN POLICY ADVISER TO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE RONALD REAGAN AND WORKED BRIEFLY IN THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION; TODAY URGED THE PRESIDENT TO SEEK THE OUSTER OF GADDAFI BY "OVERT AND COVERT MEANS;" POSSIBLY INCLUDING ASSASSINATION.

CHURBA; WHO HEADS THE CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY; A PRIVATE CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH GROUP; TOLD REPORTERS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE: "IN 1971 (LIBYAN) MILITARY OFFICERS TOLD OUR EMBASSY THAT THEY WOULD OVERTHROW GADDAFI."

HE SAID THE PLOTTERS WERE APPARENTLY SEEKING AID FROM THE UNITED STATES AND ASSUMED THAT WASHINGTON WANTED THE OUSTER OF THE RADICAL LEADER; KNOWN FOR HIS ANTI-AMERICAN RHETORIC.

BUT ACCORDING TO CHURBA; THE U.S. OFFICIALS "HANDED THE INFORMATION OVER TO GADDAFI AND THESE MEN WERE ELIMINATED."

ASKED WHAT MOTIVE THE AMERICANS MIGHT HAVE HAD FOR THWARTING THE COUP; HE REPLIED: "OIL IS A VERY BIG INTEREST...THERE ARE ECONOMIC OIL INTERESTS IN LIBYA THAT DID NOT WANT TO SEE THE CHANGE."

EVEN TODAY; HE SAID; THERE ARE ENTRENCHED BUREAUCRATS IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT WHO MAINTAIN THAT ANYONE REPLACING GADDAFI WOULD BE WORSE FOR U.S. INTERESTS; WHICH ENTAIL LARGE OIL HOLDINGS IN THE SPARSELY POPULATED NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRY.

HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW IF THEN-PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON KNEW OF THE DECISION TO BETRAY THE COUP.

CHURBA SAID LIBYA HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN FUNDING MARXIST TERRORISM AND SUBVERSION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND HAD URGED THAT REAGAN'S ADMINISTRATION BE "TERMINATED."

CONTINUED

2

LIBYA HAD PROVIDED THE FORMER MARXIST GOVERNMENT IN GRENADA WITH A \$4 MILLION LOAN TO HELP BUILD A RUNWAY THAT COULD HAVE BEEN USED FOR MILITARY PURPOSES AND WAS FUNDING TERRORISTS IN NEARBY ST LUCIA; HE SAID; CITING PUBLIC SOURCES AND A STATEMENT BY ST LUCIAN PRIME MINISTER JOHN COMPTON.

LIBYA ALSO BACKED MARXISTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA; HE SAID.

CHURBA CITED A MESSAGE GADDAFI HAD SENT TO THE U.S. CONGRESS WHICH SAID: "WE APPEAL TO YOU AND TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO TERMINATE REAGAN'S PRESIDENCY BEFORE HE FINISHES THE WORLD; INCLUDING AMERICA."

CHURBA DEEMED THE STATEMENT A "BARELY VEILED CALL FOR ASSASSINATION;" BUT OTHERS HAVE INTERPRETED IT AS A DEMAND FOR REAGAN'S IMPEACHMENT AND REMOVAL FROM OFFICE.

THE FORMER INTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL SAID HE HAD BEEN ONE OF A CIRCLE OF REAGAN ADVISERS WHO HAD URGED A POLICY AIMED AT DISMANTLING WHAT THEY SAW AS THE SOVIET EMPIRE; STARTING WITH LIBYA; CUBA AND OTHER THIRD WORLD SOVIET SURROGATES.

ULTIMATELY; SOVIET SATELLITE COUNTRIES IN EASTERN EUROPE MIGHT BE BROKEN AWAY AND THE REGIME IN MOSCOW ITSELF DISMANTLED; HE SAID.

CHURBA COMPLAINED THAT THE ADVOCATES OF THIS AGGRESSIVE POLICY; ALTHOUGH HEADED IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN; HAD SUBSEQUENTLY LOST INFLUENCE WITH REAGAN; WHO HAD BECOME TOO PASSIVE IN HIS DEALINGS WITH MOSCOW.

AFTER TAKING OFFICE; REAGAN APPOINTED CHURBA AS A SENIOR POLICY ADVISER TO THE ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY; BUT CHURBA SAID HE RESIGNED IN 1982 "OVER POLICY ISSUES."